

GEN 1053

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

3 1833 02733 1005

Gc 974.902 N48d
Day, Stephen S.
Methodism in New Providence



Methodism in New Providence

By STEPHEN S. DAY

A Paper Read at the

CENTENNIAL OF METHODISM

... IN ...

NEW PROVIDENCE, N. J.

September 29, 1898.



✓

Allen County Public Library
900 Webster Street
PO Box 2270
Fort Wayne, IN 46801-2270

Methodism in New Providence.



THE persons that would be especially interested in what I have to recite to-day are not present. Most of them are with the Heavenly multitude, but in a formal celebration of the Centennial of Methodism in New Providence, a historic paper is necessary and I have gleaned the following facts, which may be of interest to a few in this audience.

Since Methodism was not introduced into this country until 1766 and since in 1779 there but 140 members of the society in this State, it is easily seen that this is one of the mother churches of Methodism in this country.

That the society here was organized in the year 1798, rests on the testimony of my grandmother, Betsey Day, who stated to the writer that she was converted in that year in a Methodist class meeting that had just been organized and that was led by Johnny Robertson.

That there was a Methodist class in Turkey (as New Providence was formerly called) in the year 1800, is attested by the extant records of the Quarterly Conferences held in that year and in which Turkey class is credited with a contribution of seventeen shillings and six pence at one time, and \$3.05 at another.

By reference to the General Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church, we learn that in the year 1798, all the Methodist Societies in the State were under Presiding Elder James M'Claskey, and that the preachers on the Elizabeth Circuit were James Tolle-son, Samuel Thomas and Thomas Morrell.

The boundaries of the Elizabeth Circuit included a large area, covering Staten Island, Bergen, Essex, Morris and Middlesex Counties in which there were twelve or more established preaching places or classes, the chief ones being probably Staten Island and Elizabethtown, though the classes at Paramus in Bergen County, and at Chatham and Cheapside in Morris County are worthy of mention. Samuel Thomas, for whom Samuel Thomas Day was named, organized the Turkey class and appointed the leader.

Betsey Wood, afterward wife of Stephen Day, Sr., and her sisters Theodosia and Sally, daughters of Capt. Daniel S. Wood, were among the more active young women of the Methodist Society and their exemplary lives though many years of service in the church, did much to strengthen the society and overcome the prejudice that many people entertained toward the Methodists in the early days. Betsey Day was a member eighty-seven years, while her maiden sister Theodosia joined in 1800 and until her death in 1859 enjoyed a reputation for piety seldom equalled.

In 1799, Freeborn Garretson was placed in charge of Elizabeth District as Presiding Elder and the preachers appointed to the circuit were Thomas Everard and David Bartine. In 1800 the Eldership was intrusted to a man twenty-nine years of age named Solomon Sharp, the circuit preachers for the year being Joseph Totten and Jesse Justice.

In 1801 Henry Clark succeeded Jesse Justice on the circuit and he in turn was soon followed by Wm. Mills, who remained on the circuit with Jos. Totten

until the latter part of 1803. Father Mills was born in Monmouth County and at this time was about fifty-five years of age. He had been a soldier of the Revolution, was twice taken prisoner by the British, and the second time was taken to the West Indies and from thence to England, where, when peace was declared, he was released, after which he returned to this country, was converted, joined the Methodists, and became a preacher. Under the preaching of Wm. Mills, Turkey, in 1802 was visited with a powerful revival of religion and many joined the Society. He is said to have been a most devoted man of God, but his ardent zeal subjected him to violent persecutions. He was charged with witchcraft and so deeply was one individual impressed with this belief that he watched by the wayside with loaded gun to shoot him.

From the organization of the Society, until the building of the old church, prayer, class and preaching services were held in different houses in the community, but generally in the house standing on what is now known as the "Chase Property" between New Providence and West Summit, and which at that time was owned by Waters Burrows, Sr., and afterward for many years by Stephen Day, Sr. But the increasing membership of the society made a permanent place of meeting necessary and early in 1803, a meeting house was built directly across the road from the present church at the eastern end of the burying ground. The church building was not completed at this time, but simply enclosed so that the society could use it. In 1809 the walls were plastered and the seats put in. The church lot was donated to the society by Mr. George Cory, and the corner stone of the church was laid in April, 1803, the sermon being preached by one of the circuit preachers, Jos. Totten. The carpenter work was done by George

Mooney, at whose house the first Methodist meeting had been held. It is thought the first church was never formally dedicated. The Trustees were Brainard Dickinson, Joshua Ward, Isaac Searle, Daniel S. Wood, Waters Burrows, John Willcocks and Ezra Williams. In April 1803, Smith Miller and Chas. Mooney were elected to take the places of D. S. Wood and Joshua Ward who resigned. Brainard Dickinson was made president of the Board.

Quarterly meetings were events of great importance in the early days and after the building of the church, Turkey was often selected as the Quarterly meeting place. The first one was held here in January 1804, and in each succeeding year until 1808 when two Quarterly meetings were held in the place. They usually continued two days and were attended by people from every part of the Circuit. Those from a distance were entertained by those near at hand and thus the people over a wide territory became acquainted, strong friendships were formed and the denomination waxed strong.

That the Methodists produced a deep impression on the people of the community at this time is shown by the following quotations from the diary of Daniel Mulford, an uncle of Mrs. Elizabeth Day, at that time a young man of twenty, who in 1801 and 1802 was a student at Morris Academy in Morristown, and whose home was about a half a mile east of Berkley Station.

Under the date of September 1, 1801, he says in his Journal, "In the evening, I went to Methodist Meeting at Widow Valentine's," (now Dr. Bassen-ger's place near Murray Hill Station). January 16th, 1802, "Went to Methodist Meeting to Mr. Burrows'." February 1st of the same year he speaks of attending a Methodist meeting near Chatham. April 12th, "Went to David Valentine's (Stephen Day's brother-in-law) to work. Heard him preach Methodist." "In

the evening went to Stephen Day's and heard I. Oakley preach his religion." Under date of April 19, 1802, he says, "Went to Smith Miller's to a Methodist meeting where Mr. Mills and Totten preached. Heard them oppose a piece of writing that was published in Mr. Halleck's last week's paper. They bid defiance to the author to prove a single assertion that it contained. I heard them praise themselves as the trumpet sounds that gave alarm to mortals, and I swore I would curse and quit the Methodists for good." On October 24th, Mulford states that he attended a Methodist meeting at Mr. Burrows's and heard Mr. Samuel Budd preach from the text, Romans ix., "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will he hardeneth." May 22, 1803, he says, "In the morning I went to John Street meeting in New York and heard Bishop Asbury preach. In the afternoon I went to the North River Church and heard Johnny Robertson. who is now appointed on the Circuit to Boston." Our class leader had become a preacher, and Mulford criticises the sermon as follows: "His text was Job xxii; 21: 'Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.' He introduced the subject by attempting to prove that there really had been such a man as Job, which he no farther accomplished than merely to say that he believed it, and that St. Paul mentioned Job, and that as St. Paul lived so much nearer the time Job lived than we do, he certainly knew that there was such a man; therefore, he concluded the fact undoubted. He handled the sermon entirely without system."

June 26, 1803, Daniel Mulford hears that Stephen Day has been awakened under the preaching of Mr. Finley and is warmly exercised in mind. It is thought that Stephen Day joined the Methodists before his marriage with Betsey Wood in 1804. Soon after his

marriage and while living in the "Corner House" in New Providence village, he had the honor of entertaining Bishop Asbury. A few years later this privilege was again accorded him, but at this time the Bishop was in very feeble health, so feeble, indeed, that he was obliged to remain seated while preaching. His subject on this occasion was "The Day of Salvation." He urged upon the people the great importance of accepting salvation *now*. During the discourse he was often so affected that he would lift his glasses and brush away the tears. Notwithstanding the Bishop's feebleness, he conducted prayers in the family three times a day. After each meal he would say, "Let us pray," and bowing before God, would offer a fervent prayer.

From 1802 to 1806 the circuit was under the Eldership of Thos. Ware, and in 1804 the preachers were Thos. Morrell, Benj. Iliff and Samuel Budd. In 1806 the preachers were Wm. M'Lenahan and David Bartine.

During the year 1806, according to the Mulford diary (he at that time being a student at Yale College), there was a general camp meeting at New Rochelle, N. Y., and a host of Turkey Methodists attended it. Among the number David Valentine is mentioned. During a college vacation of this year Mulford visited Turkey and lodged for a night with his brother-in-law, John Crane. The following extract from Mulford's journal will show the zeal of New Providence Methodists at that time. He says, "I returned to John Crane's about sunset. David Valentine soon came in to see me. After him came six other Methodists and completely surrounded me. Four of them soon left, but the three remaining staid until ten, when they each in immediate succession made a most ardent prayer. Two then left us, but

David staid conversing with me until half past twelve."

In a letter written by Daniel Mulford from Yale College to his brother, Levi, a clerk in a store in Morristown, and dated April 5, 1806, we find the following concerning their sister Betsey Crane, wife of John Crane and mother of Mrs. Elizabeth Day. "I received a letter a few days ago from Betsey which astonished me. I conclude from the language that she has turned Methodist, though she did not say it in plain words. She asked the explanation of several passages of scripture and wanted to know my religious principles. I wish in your next you would inform me whether my conjecture is right, and if not please tell me if you know what got into her to write so. If she has become a Methodist, and should by any Methodistical witchcraft metamorphose you into one I hope you'll make a better one than Turkey sometimes produces, and that in your struggles for the good of the soul you'll not altogether neglect your business and let the body suffer. The soul can be taken care of without neglecting your business, and I believe without all that fuss which they used to make in Turkey." In a letter written a few days later by Betsey Crane, she says to her brother, "You write that there are few Methodists in New Haven. You will find them very numerous here and they are still increasing, and I hope some of them are quite rational beings. You will not be surprised when I tell you that Gabriel Johnson, Timothy Pettit, Smith Wood, Burnet Osborn, Aaron Oakley, Huldah Burnet, Polly Parsons, Sally Totten and a number more, are asking 'What shall I do to be saved.'"

At the quarterly meeting held in Turkey in 1809 Manning Force and Stephen Day were licensed to preach, the latter having been made a class leader in 1805.

The first New Providence camp meeting was held on Long Hill in Morris County on property then owned by Jos. Rutan, located near Townley's bridge, at the crossing of the Passaic river by the Passaic and Delaware railroad. It commenced July 20, 1810, and was conducted by Elder Jos. Totten, Wm. Mills and Jacob Hevener.

At a quarterly meeting held in Turkey, March 21, 1812, "it was on motion, resolved, that twenty-two dollars of the interest due the Circuit from the Trustees of the Church at Turkey be appropriated to the payment of Stephen Day for house rent and horse keeping of Thos. Neal. It was further resolved that John Hancock and Philemon Dickerson be a committee to wait on the Trustees of the Turkey meeting house in order to make a settlement between them and the Circuit relative to the Circuit's money, which they have applied to their church, and obtain from them proper documents and securities for any balance which may be due the Circuits, and make reports of their proceedings to the next Quarterly Conference." From this we infer that the entire Circuit aided in building the church by making a loan, as does the Board of Church Extension in these days.

At a Quarterly Meeting held in Turkey in 1814 the following minute was made:

" ESSEX CIRCUIT.

Fourth Quarterly Meeting held in Turkey March 19,
1814.

MEMBERS PRESENT.

PETER VANNESS,	STEPHEN DAY,
STEPHEN MARTINDALE,	BRAINARD DICKINSON,
JOHN FINLEY,	WATERS BURROWS,
JOHN HANCOCK,	JOS. CRANE,
JOS. SANDFORD,	THOS. PARROT,
HENRY COOK,	MOSES STYLES.

“Waters Burrows was recommended for license to exhort and obtained it. John Hancock offered himself a candidate for the office of deacon and was recommended to the next Annual Conference. John Dow was recommended by two thirds of this conference for elder’s orders.

“Samuel Bonsall requested the determination of this conference relative to the time a colored woman should serve him (named Ann). Ten years from this time was agreed upon.

“The next Quarterly Meeting will be held at Belle Ville (Belleville), 18th and 19th of June next.

“ESSEX CIRCUIT.

Third Quarterly Meeting held at New Providence,
December 10, 1814.

MEMBERS PRESENT.

PETER VANNES, P. E.,	JOHN ROBERTSON, C. P.,
BENJ. MUNN,	JOHN FINLEY,
BRAINARD DICKINSON,	STEPHEN DAY,
THOS. PARROT,	PHIL. DICKINSON,
JOHN CRANE,	JOS. CRANE,
JOHN SCHUREMAN,	ISAAC SEARLS,
WATERS BURROWS.	

“The address of the Annual Conference to the several circuits on the subject of providing for the preacher’s families was read and acted on, and a committee consisting of John Hancock, Philemon Dickinson, John Crane, Thos. Parrot, Ezra Williams, was appointed to purchase, build or rent a parsonage as their judgment may direct.”

The following incident is related of Jos. Totten, who was on the Circuit in 1815.

A certain Mr. Woodruff, who lived in Turkey, was noted for his opposition to the Methodists.

Brother Totten sought to overcome his opposition by appointing a prayer meeting at his house. When the time for the meeting arrived, Mr. Woodruff took station in his doorway with a whip, determined to prevent the meeting. As Brother Totten approached, he greeted Mr. Woodruff thus; "How do you do, Mr. Woodruff?" Said Mr. Woodruff, "Good-bye, Mr. Totten." Mr. Totten came nearer. "Go away from my house," says Woodruff, "for I have sworn that no Methodist preacher shall enter my door, and if you don't these words obey, I'll take this whip and drive you away." What effect this poetical threat had upon Mr. Totten is not known, nor is there any record of Mr. Woodruff's having joined the Methodists.

Bishop McKendree visited New Providence in 1816, and while lodging with Stephen Day, heard of the death of his senior colleague, Bishop Asbury. He is said to have been greatly affected by the news, and walked the floor, seriously contemplating the increased responsibilities which would henceforth rest upon him.

The year 1819 is remembered as a time of a great revival. The preachers were Asa Smith and Bartholomew Weed, and through the labors of the latter, with Elder Lawrence McCombs, the work was chiefly carried on. Among the number added to the church at this time, we find the names of William Cory, Maxwell Miller, Benjamin, Stephen and Mulford Day and Levi and Mulford Wilcox.

From the years 1824 to 1828, Betsey Crane, wife of John Crane and mother of Mrs. Elizabeth Day, kept a diary and from it we have been able to glean some interesting particulars regarding the doings of the Methodists in those years. On April 15, 1824, she writes, "Dr. Crossfield commenced digging his cellar." This is of interest because the cellar referred to is the one under the present Parsonage. The

property was bought by the Society of Levi Clark in 1836. On April 24, 1824, she mentions a "Stone Frolic" at Dr. Crossfield's cellar.

On May 30th, "Mr. Wiggins preached his first sermon since conference." On June 6th, she says, "There was no preaching, but on the following Sabbath, Mr. Best preached and offended the girls." Mrs. Crane had three or four daughters. Further evidence of Brother Best's disregard of the sensibilities of young ladies was shown when he would not admit a young woman to the Love Feast which she had travelled seven miles to attend, and all because she wore a veil on her hat. Such a manifestation of vanity could not be condoned, and she was driven out in the cold to find shelter where she could, until her friends who were admitted should join her after service. The lady is still living and related this incident to me recently. Father Best is said to have been an able thinker, but, a defective delivery, together with some eccentricities, rendered him somewhat unpopular. In referring to his delivery on a certain occasion, he remarked that there were many men who could not distinguish between sound and sense.

On June 27, 1824, Betsey Crane records, "Mr. Wiggins preached at the Church in the morning and at Mr. Tucker's at Union Village in the afternoon." July 4th, "No preaching." July 11th, "Stephen Day preached. It was Mr. Best's turn." This gives a hint as to the questioning of the time, "Who is going to preach to-day?" "It's Mr. Wiggins's turn;" or "Who preached to-day?" "It was Mr. Best's turn, but he didn't come, so Stephen Day preached." In those days a local preacher found frequent opportunity to exercise his talents.

August 8th, "No preaching. All the Methodists at the old church." By this is doubtless meant the Presbyterian church. Friday, September 10, 1824,

“Camp Meeting commenced at Wolf Hill, near Union Village.” On the third day of the meeting there was thought to be four thousand persons present. Jos. Rusling preached in the morning, and Manning Force in the afternoon. On Monday the preaching was by Isaac Winner and B. Weed. The meeting broke up on Tuesday morning. On the Saturday following the Camp Meeting, there was a Camp Meeting Prayer Meeting held at the church in New Providence, and on Saturday Mr. Wiggins preached and five or six joined the church.

On October 30th she says, “Five persons dipped [or baptized] in the Passaic River at the mouth of the Salt Brook.”

On December 18, 1825, “Union Village Church was dedicated to-day. The sermon was preached by Rev. Mr. Roy.” March 6, 1826, “A new carpet was put in the Meeting House.” The yarn for this carpet had been spun by Mrs. Crane’s daughters, and she frequently refers to it in her diary.

On March 9th she records, “The curtains at the meeting house were put up on account of Quarterly Meeting occurring next Sunday.” From this Diary we learn that Mr. Banghart preached on June 11, 1826, and that he and Thomas Sovereign went to John Crane’s to dinner. On March 11, 1827, Bishop Enoch George preached to a great congregation from the text, II. Cor. vi; 2; “Behold, now is the accepted time; Behold, now is the day of salvation.”

On May 6, 1827, Anthony Atwood preached his first sermon in New Providence, from the text, “The Lord our God is one Lord.” Shortly after this record Betsey Crane passed to her reward, and so far as is known no one in the church followed up her good work of diary keeping. Her husband, John Crane, was Treasurer of the church from 1815 to 1843. H

account book of receipts and disbursements in detail is of much interest.

In 1831 New Providence became a regular preaching station of the Philadelphia Conference and Benjamin Collins was appointed preacher; but shortly after entering upon his work here and while attending a camp meeting near Washington, N. J., he met with an accident that cost him his life. He fell from a rock ledge and was so severely injured that he died in a few days. He was succeeded by George Brown, and he in turn in 1833 by J. K. Shaw.

At the Conference held in Philadelphia in 1834, New Providence station was connected with Springfield, Chatham and Genungtown and called New Providence Circuit."

In May, 1833, J. K. Shaw secured a suitable book and made a record of the members of the classes included in New Providence Circuit, and the preachers who succeeded him up to 1844 made valuable additions to these records. This valuable book should be put somewhere for safe keeping.

In 1834 the members of the Quarterly Conference were John Hancock, Philemon Dickinson, Aaron F. Ross, Alfred Morehouse, Matthias Swaim, Enos N. Townley, Henry R. Hedges, Jonathan Totten, Farrand Ward, Elihu Green, Thos. O. Scudder, Wickliffe H. Genung, Stephen Day, Benj. Weed, William M. Kitchell, Asher Morehouse, David French.

In 1836 New Providence and Union Village were joined as a station with Francis A. Morrell as preacher. He remained two years and was followed successively in 1838-39-40 by Daniel Parrish, Wm. A. Wilmer and Sedgwick Rusling.

In 1838 the New Providence Church Trustees were Stephen Day, Sr., Stephen Day, Jr., David Morehouse, John Crane, Benj. Wood and Mulford Wilcox.

The class leaders at this time were Stephen Day, Jr., Stephen Day, Sr., Daniel S. Wood and John Crane.

In 1842 under the preaching of Mulford Day, New Providence was blessed with probably the greatest revival in its history. Late in the summer a camp meeting was held on Long Hill, resulting in a number of conversions, but no very special interest was apparent. The camp meeting was followed by protracted meetings, held on alternate nights at Union Village and New Providence. The meetings were continued for nearly three weeks without any movement on the part of the unconverted. At last two prominent young ladies at the village went forward for prayers and were soundly converted. The next evening one of the converts, Ann Currie Clark, arose from her seat on the ladies' side of the church and passing around to the men's side urged her uncle, a young man and a backslider, again to seek Christ. He refused the invitation, but the noble act of the young lady produced a profound impression, and the next evening about sixty went forward for prayers. From this time the work went like fire in a dry stubble, resulting in 142 probationers at the New Providence Church, and twenty-two at Union Village. Wagon loads of people would come from Union Village to the meetings in New Providence, and the next night wagon loads would go from New Providence to Union Village. Among those received into the church at that time we find the names of John R. Burnett, Janet and Charlotte Torboss, Edwin A., Daniel W., and Wm. M. Day, Wm. Cory, John Wood, Geo. B. Day, Wm. G. Marsh, Edgar Samson, David C. Hand, Benj. Hand, Ezra Wilcox, Aaron Johnson, Jas. Pitts, John M. Wilcox, Henry Wilcox, Lewis Noe and David Badgley.

On January 1st, 1843, Smith M. Miller was admitted, and in January, 1844, Samuel Durrie and Francis A. Day joined.

The present church edifice was built under the administration of Abraham M. Palmer in 1856 and '57 at a cost of about \$10,000. The dedication exercises occurred July 27th, 1857, the sermon being preached by Bishop Scott. Among the prominent preachers present were I. W. Wiley, D. D., afterward Bishop, and J. B. Wakeley, D. D. During the building of the church a revival of much interest progressed, resulting in over fifty conversions. The Church Trustees at this time were Stephen Day, Martin Ruckman, Samuel Baldwin, Aaron Johnson, Benj. Hand, Wm. E. Samson and John Wood. It may be of interest to some to know that much of the material from the old church building was used in putting an addition to the building that since 1836 has been the home of the New Providence Methodist preachers.

An account of the revival in 1858 under Benj. Kelly, and of the good work done in later years, I leave for those who can speak from experience of this period of the history of this old Church home.

We can hardly estimate the influence of a hundred years of Methodism in New Providence, for to do so would require the weighing of the influence of a goodly number of preachers and of the lives of scores of men and women who have gone forth to become pillars in other churches, or have passed to their eternal home.





BAKER PRINTING CO.,
251 MARKET ST., NEWARK, N. J.
1898.



